



# **NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL**

**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

## **THESIS**

**APPLYING PSYCHOSOCIAL THEORIES OF  
TERRORISM TO THE RADICALIZATION PROCESS: A  
MAPPING OF DE LA CORTE'S SEVEN PRINCIPLES TO  
HOMEGROWN RADICALS**

by

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June 2011

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<b>REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE</b>			<i>Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188</i>	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington DC 20503.				
<b>1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)</b>		<b>2. REPORT DATE</b> June 2011	<b>3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED</b> Master's Thesis	
<b>4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE</b> Applying Psychosocial Theories of Terrorism to the Radicalization Process: A Mapping of De La Corte's Seven Principles to Homegrown Radicals			<b>5. FUNDING NUMBERS</b>	
<b>6. AUTHOR(S)</b> Alejandro Vargas, Jr.				
<b>7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000			<b>8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER</b>	
<b>9. SPONSORING /MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> N/A			<b>10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER</b>	
<b>11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES</b> The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. government. IRB Protocol number __N/A_____.				
<b>12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT</b> Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited			<b>12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE</b> A	
<b>13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words)</b>  This study contains an application of psychosocial theories to the process of radicalization among Muslim militants (jihadis) with a history of activity in the United States. Drawing extensively from De la Corte's seven psychosocial principles of terrorism, the study codes each principle into a corresponding example from case studies of American jihadism. The end result is the use of theory to create a new empirical and psychosocial perspective into homegrown jihadism. The application of De la Corte's theory is also used as a framework to suggest frameworks for detection, intervention, and interdiction when it comes to homegrown jihadi activity.				
<b>14. SUBJECT TERMS</b> Terrorism, homegrown terrorism, radicalization, terrorist, jihad, jihadist, jihadi, psychosocial radicalization, homegrown radicals, Muslim militants, Islamism, Luis De la Corte, Los Angeles Police Department			<b>15. NUMBER OF PAGES</b> 71	
			<b>16. PRICE CODE</b>	
<b>17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT</b> Unclassified	<b>18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE</b> Unclassified	<b>19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT</b> Unclassified	<b>20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT</b> UU	

NSN 7540-01-280-5500

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 2-89)  
Prescribed by ANSI Std. Z39-18

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**APPLYING PSYCHOSOCIAL THEORIES OF TERRORISM TO THE  
RADICALIZATION PROCESS: A MAPPING OF DE LA CORTE'S SEVEN  
PRINCIPLES TO HOMEGROWN RADICALS**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN SECURITY STUDIES  
(HOMELAND SECURITY AND DEFENSE)**

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL  
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## **ABSTRACT**

This study contains an application of psychosocial theories to the process of radicalization among Muslim militants (jihadis) with a history of activity in the United States. Drawing extensively from De la Corte's seven psychosocial principles of terrorism, the study codes each principle into a corresponding example from case studies of American jihadism. The end result is the use of theory to create a new empirical and psychosocial perspective into homegrown jihadism. The application of De la Corte's theory is also used as a framework to suggest frameworks for detection, intervention, and interdiction when it comes to homegrown jihadi activity.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Terrorism, particularly what is now known as jihadi terrorism, has become a persistent and deadly problem for many of the world's nations and peoples. Since rising to prominence as a form of political violence in the 1970s, terrorism has mutated into a major threat to nation-states and individuals alike. Particularly after the 9/11 terror attacks in the United States, there has been a great deal of scholarly interest in generating theories of terrorism. Such work addresses important gaps in the previous scholarship of terrorism, which, from the 1970s to the 1990s, is best described as patchy.

One of the main conclusions that a number of scholars (Bjorgo, 2005; De la Corte, 2007; Gerges, 2005, 2006; & Pape, 2006) have reached is that terrorism can be explained as a psychosocial phenomenon. This explanation is a convincing one, for a number of reasons. First, it matches the data that terrorism is the result of personal pathology. Second, it also models the impact of cultural variables on the individual psyches of terrorists. By encompassing processes from the brain of the terrorist to the structure of his or her culture and society, the psychosocial theory of terrorism offers a rich explanatory framework for researchers, law enforcement personnel, and policy-makers alike. The psychosocial theory is also broad enough to encompass the insights of other forms of explanatory theories of terrorism, as will be demonstrated in this study.

In De la Corte's (2007) influential formulation of the psychosocial theory of terrorism, psychosocial factors are applied to what might be called the post-commitment stages; in other words, this theory applies to terrorism in the execution stages. Therefore, one of the gaps in the psychosocial theory is that it does not account for the pre-execution stages of terrorism—that is, all the processes that predate the moment of the actual terror attack. For example, psychosocial theories of terrorism have not been widely applied to the radicalization phase of terrorism, during which an ordinary person becomes, through a series of psychological and social processes, into a terrorist or potential terrorist.

De la Corte's (2007) psychosocial theory, which was designed to account for terrorism in its active stage, can also be repurposed to better model and understand

radicalization from a psychosocial perspective. In particular, De la Corte's first, second, third, fifth, and sixth principles can be applied to radicalization. This paper contains precisely such an application of De la Corte's theory to a body of data gathered from primary and secondary accounts of radicalization in the United States, with a special focus on Islamist—also known as jihadist—terrorism (Neumann & Smith, 2007). The goal is to apply an existing theory of terrorism to coding an empirical body of case studies of domestic terrorism. This goal is an apt one for research because, despite the widespread use and popularity of the psychosocial theory of terrorism, it has not been used as a unitary framework from which to code multiple individual incidents of jihadism, especially jihadism carried out within the United States. The existing applications of psychosocial theory (such as those of Gerges, 2005, and Pape, 2006) to empirical case studies have focused on foreign jihadis active outside America.

Therefore, there are two steps in the broader platform of this study. The first step is to describe the psychosocial stance towards terrorism. This step is an important academic exercise in its own right because scholars employing the psychosocial methodology have often failed to draw the links between their own work and that of other scholars, drawing upon different versions of psychosocial theory. It is, therefore, significant in its own right that this study contains a literature review that unites the main psychosocial terrorism theories of the past 30 years, puts them into close conceptual engagement with each other, and explains how De la Corte's (2007) principles can be used to organize the theories. Additionally, as part of describing the psychosocial stance towards jihadism in particular, it will be necessary to demonstrate how existing approaches to jihadism—in particular, historical, theological, and political approaches—can be subsumed within psychosocial theory. In other words, the psychosocial theory of jihadism is not a replacement to existing theories, but a new perspective that can be used to enhance the findings of other theories, such as those based in politics, religion, and history.

The second step is to apply the psychosocial theory of jihadism to cases of homegrown jihadism. This step has two components. The first and more theoretical component demonstrates how psychosocial theories of jihadism can help to code and



explain prior acts of American jihadism. The second and more practical component is prediction and diagnosis; it looks to the future and explains how, based on how well the theory performed in assessing past studies, the psychosocial stance can be applied to detect, intervene in, and interdict American jihadism.

## **A. BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM**

The problem has two intertwined components. The real-world aspect of the problem is that terrorism itself continues unabated, destroying lives and property all over the world. The academic aspect of the problem is that terrorism is far from being understood. It is only recently that significant academic attention has been devoted to the phenomenon of Islamist terrorism, which is the sole topic of this paper.

Examining the phenomenon of jihadism is one of the most pressing intelligence, policy, and security issues of our time. Surprisingly, however, there is little substantive work in this field, largely due to the explosive politics that underlie the subject. Until the early 1970s, there was little or no English-language literature on the subject at all, probably because there had been no spectacular acts of terrorism committed by Muslims in Western heartlands until 1972 (Devji, 2005). In that year, the Black September Group killed a number of Israeli athletes in the 1972 Munich Olympics, ushering in an ongoing age of terrorism committed by Muslims. This first wave of terrorism was not necessarily Islamic terrorism per se because it was often committed by Palestinian secular nationalists who were not committed to either the principles of the practice of Islamic law. Wieviorka and White (2004) made the point that, in this era, Palestinian terrorists only took on the veneer of jihadists, or Muslim holy warriors, in order to convince certain Arab sponsors to fund them; privately, the Palestinians are committed to the secular cause of nationalism.

A watershed moment occurred in 1979, the year in which the theocratic Iranian Revolution took place. The taking of American hostages on that occasion marked the first time since the Barbary Wars of the early nineteenth century that the American state approached a state of belligerence with a Muslim nation. However, even this event did not spur a widespread academic examination of the links between Islamism and

terrorism; it was treated by some scholars as a geopolitical event with Islamist undertones. Even Bernard Lewis (2001), ordinarily an astute observer of radical Muslim, wrote about the event as a social movement rather than an expression of physical violence against the Shah's secular regime and symbolic violence against the non-Muslims of Iran (soon to be intimidated and expelled from the country).

Interestingly, the U.S. policy community was ahead of the academic community in this regard. Bruce Hoffman's brief but masterful article on both Shia and Sunni terrorism demonstrates a profound awareness of the linkage between Islamism and terrorism. His work is particularly noteworthy for providing translations of clerical calls for terrorism, offering direct insight into theological rationalizations of violence (Hoffman, 1984).

However, for much of the 1980s and 1990s, the academic discourse on Islam and terrorism was largely a branch of the discussion on Israel. Frankly, it was not until September 11, 2001, that, for obvious reasons, the subject went mainstream and cast a huge shadow across both academic and popular publishing. The problem during this period was the emergence and hardening of a polarized debate, with apologists for Islamism dissociating the religion from violence (recalling, in their way, the "few bad apples" defense for Abu Ghraib) and Islamophobes launching hyperbolic and uniformed attacks on the entire religion. Esposito (2005) and Armstrong (2002) are examples of apologists (i.e., they treat Islam as a subject for uncritical celebration rather than critique, an approach much in vogue since Said (1979)). Not much more academically useful than apologists are those encyclopedists—like Lapidus (2002)—who skirted around the contemporary issues raised by Islam in favor of a purely archival approach. Fortunately, a few thoughtful scholars produced work that clarified the links between Islamism and terrorism without falling into this discursive trap. Fawaz Gerges produced a number of books of interviews with actual terrorists, offering genuine insight into how people who committed these atrocities linked them to religion (2005).

Complementing Gerges' anthropological approach to the study of Islamist terrorism, Robert Pape (2006) became one of the very few clear-minded strategic analysts of the military logic of this phenomenon. Pape avoided the seemingly ubiquitous (in

academic and otherwise) urge to brand suicide terrorism irrational, and instead took it seriously on its own terms as a tactic with a long and successful history. A number of scholars (such as Howarth, 2005) also began to produce translations of Islamic texts, offering much-needed insight into the formal theory (as opposed to the informal theories turned up in Gerges' interviews) of Islamist terrorism.

All of these scholarly works have touched on the problem of radicalization. In the United States and other Western countries, radicalization is a phenomenon responsible for converting ordinary members of society into terrorists or would-be terrorists. There is now a wide body of documentary data that discusses these home-grown terrorists and offers some context about their radicalization (Woodward, 2010) but, as of yet, existing theories of terrorism have not been rigorously applied to this population to determine and model what turns them to terrorism. The problem is that there is still no compelling theory of why people are radicalized into terrorist violence, even though there are a number of promising theoretical frameworks, such as those of Puar (2007) and De la Corte (2007) that could add further insight.

## **B. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The purpose of the study is to apply qualitative research methodology to the following research questions:

- Research Question 1: Can De la Corte's (2007) first, second, fifth, and sixth principles of psychosocial terrorism be applied to radicalization and, if so, how?
- Research Question 2: If De la Corte's theory of the psychosocial basis of radicalization is affirmed, what is the threshold of difference between those who become radicalized and those who do not?
- Research Question 3: Why does psychosocial radicalization lead to violence?

The research questions build on each other and more, in pyramid fashion, from the broad to the targeted. The first research question asks whether the psychosocial theory of radicalization is, in fact, defensible. The second research question asks how psychosocial concepts can be tied into a threshold theory of violence—that is, how

psychosocial theories are capable of differentiating between those who act on radicalization and those who do not. The third research question asks how psychosocial theories can close the loop in terms of explaining actual violence. Even though the research questions will be assessed separately and by different means, they are still part of a unitary research agenda, which is to explain, defend, and detail an account of jihadi radicalization that draws upon both theory and empirical studies.

### **C. METHODOLOGY**

The methodology of the study is qualitative, phenomenological, and rooted in the specific formats of case study and grounded theory coding. Data will come from primary and secondary sources pertaining to two major homegrown jihadis for whom extensive data is available and will be coded according to Hansen's (2008) grounded theory coding framework so as to show links between radicalization and De la Corte's (2007) psychosocial principles. The phenomenological theories drawn upon are Rosenberg's (1960) and Festinger's (1956) theories of attitude maintenance in the presence of uncertainty and psychic stress.

### **D. A BRIEF REVIEW OF THE PROFESSIONAL AND ACADEMIC LITERATURE**

While Chapter II is a thorough review of the literature, it is important to introduce some of the higher-level themes and concepts beforehand, to create the proper context for a more detailed discussion. Because the study is closely focused on Islamist radicalization, the literature is largely limited to treatments, theories, and histories of Muslim radicalization and the context in which it takes place. This study will not pay extensive attention to the history of terrorism, but will instead draw upon the literature to create a background sketch of the psychosocial circumstances in which radicalization takes place. Existing theories of jihadi terrorism will be discussed and subsumed into psychosocial theory. Table 1 captures some of the seminal work in the field (note that De la Corte's is not mentioned here, as it will be discussed extensively in both the second and the third chapters of the study).

Table 1. Recent Work of Interest on Terrorism

Item	Findings	Limitations	Other Notes
Bin Laden, <i>Messages to the World</i> .	None: personal memoir. Bin Laden records his personal motivations for holy war and justifies terrorism in the name of Islam.	Anecdotal. Bin Laden is here speaking for himself and, while immensely valuable, his perspective is not that of all Islamist terrorists.	Useful data for any researcher examining the psychosocial process of radicalization.
Bjorgo, <i>Root Causes of Terrorism</i> .  Neumann and Smith, <i>The Strategy of Terrorism</i> .  Smelser, <i>The Faces of Terrorism</i> .	Various: contributors consider economic, sociological, psychological, and social-revolutionary causes of terrorism.	The studies are largely commentaries on secondary sources; no direct context with jihadists themselves informs the research.	A survey of many kinds of terrorism, including right-win terrorism, reminds us that Islamist terrorism might also be parsed into different categories: political (Palestinian), apocalyptic (Al Qaeda), etc.
Wievorka and White, <i>The Making of Terrorism</i> .	Terrorism is an iterative activity that builds on previous methods and successes.	Again, no direct data collected from jihadists.	It is worth applying these findings to Islamist terrorism, e.g. in discussing the evolution from nationalist to transnationalist violence.
Gerges, <i>The Far Enemy</i> .  Gerges, <i>Journey of the Jihadist</i> .	Qualitative: jihadists across the world are interviewed at length by Gerges, offering many life stories. Among the findings is the terrorists' realization that America, 'the far enemy,' should surpass Israel as the ultimate target of action.	Gerges presents a lot of data, but has not bothered to quantify any of it. Thus, a scholarly reader would have to do this work from scratch, e.g. in tabulating all the various justifications for terrorism given by Gerges' interviewees.	Another excellent source of primary data on radicalization.

Item	Findings	Limitations	Other Notes
Pape, <i>Dying to Win</i> .	Suicide terrorism is a strategic military tactic with a long history of success.	Pape's analysis is at times too dry, draining the subject of its obvious emotional and religious underpinnings. He often makes jihadists seem like abstract agents in game theory.	A possible complement to any psychosocial theory of terrorist radicalization.
Hoffman, "Holy Terror."	The main cause of Islamist terror (of both the Sunni and Shia varieties) is the existential threat posed by Israel.	The article, though informative, is short; longer excerpts from Muslim clerics would have been welcome.	Background reading.
Lewis, <i>Islam in History</i> .	Terrorism is new to Islamic history, and should not be over-emphasized in evaluating Islam as a civilization.	As a historian, Lewis does not ask himself whether recent Islam has undergone a mutation in its DNA; its peacefulness 400 years ago might not be relevant now.	Background reading.

## E. CONCLUSION

From Osama Bin Laden to the Times Square Bomber, from Richard Reid to John Allen Muhammad and Nidal Hassan, America is under literal bombardment from terrorists and would-be terrorists (White, 2011). What was once a phenomenon geographically delimited to the Middle and Near East has struck throughout America. As radicalization spreads, it is entirely possible that there will be more and more analogues of the Times Square Bomber and John Allen Muhammad: born Americans, or legal residents of America with deep roots in the country, who decide to take to the way of jihad.

The evidence demonstrates that radicals leave a trail behind them. No one wakes up transformed into a radical; there are predictable steps that lead from initial ideas about terrorism to socialization, recruitment, and eventually deployment into the field. In

studying these steps, it is theoretically possible to develop a profile of radicals that will be of great utility to populations ranging from sociologists to law enforcement personnel. Indeed, a procedure of this sort has been applied with great success to serial killers. Once mysterious objects of fear, serial killers have now been studied so thoroughly that they can be easily profiled. The early signs of being a potential serial killer are now so obvious that they can be acted upon and pre-empted by families, schools, law enforcement, and other authorities (Douglass, Burgess, & Burgess, 2011).

A similar model will eventually be needed for radicals, particularly those who choose the path of jihad. At one level, such a model is now a practical necessity. As the number of homegrown Islamist radicals increases, it is a law enforcement necessity to better understand the process by which a jihadist is formed. The psychosocial approach modeled by De la Corte (2007) is highly promising in offering the beginnings of such a model. The psychosocial model is not only a plausible explanation of the birth of radicalization but also a template that can be used, at a practical level, to detect potential radicals. It is of special interest that, in the case of the Times Square Bomber, the terrorist's father was quoted as being in deep opposition to his son's philosophy, and claims he would have taken preventive action had he known what his son was planning (Barkun, 2011). There are many people—fathers, brothers, sisters, counselors, law enforcement officials, imams, social workers, and others—who could benefit from a better understanding of radicalization.

Therefore, this study is of practical as well as academic significance. Academically, the study fills a gap in the psychosocial literature on terrorism by applying the De la Corte (2007) model to a hitherto little-studied aspect of the lifecycle of terrorism, namely radicalization. Practically, the study is of real-world value to any individual who needs to have a better understanding of radicalization, whether to diagnose, interdict, or manage it. The case study method, combined with the application of the psychosocial approach, is a way of coding the behavior of homegrown terrorists in a new and interesting way.

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## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The purpose of the literature review is threefold: (a) To understand what research reveals about the role of Islamism, history, culture, and religion itself in the radicalization of the jihadi personality; (b) to survey the evidence for a psychosocial theory of radicalization, not as an alternative to existing theories but as a new perspective on existing theories; and (c) to discuss Rosenberg's (1960) and Festinger's (1956) theories of personality as means to add conceptual content to the general psychosocial principles of De la Corte (2007), specifically, by explaining the key psychosocial differences between the radicalized and the radicalized. The literature review is a wide survey of ideas, between which researchers can remain agnostic, but all of which can ultimately be put into a psychosocial context.

### **A. GENERAL OVERVIEW OF PREVIOUS STUDIES**

Examining the connection between radical Islam and terrorism is one of the most pressing intelligence, policy, and security issues of our time. Surprisingly, however, there is little substantive work in this field, largely due to the explosive politics that underlie the subject. Until the early 1970s, there was little or no English-language literature on the subject at all, probably because there had been no spectacular acts of terrorism committed by Muslims until 1972. In that year, the Black September Group killed a number of Israeli athletes in the 1972 Munich Olympics, ushering in an ongoing age of terrorism committed by Muslims. This first wave of terrorism was not necessarily coded as Islamic terrorism per se, because it was often committed by Palestinian secular nationalists who were not committed to either the principles of the practice of Islamic law. Wieviorka and White (2004) made the point that, in this era, Palestinian terrorists only took on the veneer of jihadists, or Muslim holy warriors, in order to convince certain Arab sponsors to fund them; privately, the Palestinians were committed to the secular cause of nationalism.

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However, for much of the 1980s and 1990s, the academic discourse on Islam and terrorism was largely a branch of the discussion on Israel. Frankly, it was not until September 11, 2001, that, for obvious reasons, the subject went mainstream and cast a huge shadow across both academic and popular publishing. The problem during this period was the emergence and hardening of a polarized debate, with apologists for Islamism dissociating the religion from violence (recalling, in their way, the "few bad apples" defense for Abu Ghraib) and Islamophobes launching hyperbolic and uniformed attacks on the entire religion. Fortunately, a few thoughtful scholars produced work that clarified the links between radical Islam and terrorism without falling into this discursive trap. Fawaz Gerges (2005, 2006) produced a number of books of interviews with actual terrorists, offering genuine insight into how people who committed these atrocities linked them to religion.

Complementing Gerges' anthropological approach to the study of Islamist terrorism, Robert Pape (2006) became one of the very few clear-minded strategic analysts of the military logic of this phenomenon. Pape avoided the seemingly ubiquitous (in academic and otherwise) urge to brand suicide terrorism irrational, and instead took it seriously on its own terms as a tactic with a long and successful history.

A number of scholars (such as Lawrence & Howarth, 2006) also began to produce translations of Islamic texts, offering much-needed insight into the formal theory (as opposed to the informal theories turned up in Gerges' interviews) of Islamist terrorism. Combining original-source interviews and translations with a handful of strategic analyses offers the best chance of illustrating the link between radical Islam and terrorism in terms of not only theology but also politics and sociology. Finally, it is important to remember that terrorism is not a uniquely Islamist activity, and can be studied without making any specific appeal to the theological or political logic of Islam. To this end, a number of recent studies (including the work of Bjorgo, 2005; Smelser, 2007; & Neumann & Smith, 2007) offer high-level theories of terrorism that do not dwell specifically on Islam.

## **B. HISTORY AND ISLAMISM AS PREDICTORS OF RADICALIZATION**

What prompts Islamist terrorism? Is it primarily historical grievance, as Lewis (2004) and Pape (2006) would suggest? Is it Islamism itself that justifies and leads to violence, as Hoffman (2009) suggests? Or is Jihadism the violence of the economically and politically dispossessed, as Wieviorka and White (2004) suggest? Is terrorism a kind of generic social and psychological phenomena (Bjorgo, 2005; Smelser 2007; Neumann & Smith, 2007) rooted in local grievances? Finally, is an extension of what might be called the band of brothers theory (i.e., terrorism as an affirmation of the martial values of a small group of like-minded men) advanced by Gerges (2005, 2006) and tacitly supported by Bin Laden (2005) himself? Taking scholars' depictions of events surrounding Iraq, 9/11, and Afghanistan as case studies, we can test these theories in the crucible of reality.

The historical grievance theory of radicalization can be challenged. While Bin Laden (2005) was certainly aware of Islamic history, there is indication that, for example, Taliban rank-and-file in Afghanistan or Al Qaeda in Iraq operatives share this awareness (and, hence, any grievance emerging from it). There are a number of independent data points that confirm this hypothesis. First, consider the statement made by Mullah Omar, the leader of the Afghan Taliban who fled Tora Bora in advance of the

U.S. assault. Omar bizarrely declared himself leader of the global Muslim community—in a way that, as Devji (2005) noted, was deeply confused:

...the Taliban leader Mullah Omar chose in Kandahar to drape himself in a mantle belonging to the Prophet and declare himself the Commander of the Faithful, a title used for the caliphs who were meant to be Muhammad's successors. In what way did this coronation conform to any Deobandi or Wahhabi teaching? If anything the vision of Mullah Omar donning the Prophet's mantle suggests Sufi and especially Shia themes, since the latter believe in the apostolic succession of those members of Muhammad's family whom he famously covered with his cloak. And it is precisely such forms of authority that both the Deobandis and Wahhabis are supposed to execrate. (Devji, 2005, pp. 22–23)

It is impossible to understate the incoherence of Omar's gesture. In American terms, it is as if a quarterback for the Dallas Cowboys turned up in the Super Bowl wearing a Redskins uniform. The Taliban are not only the arch-enemies of Shi'ism (Rashid, 2002, p. 74) but also part of a Sunni tradition in which only the ruler of the Arabian Peninsula—where the Qa'aba, or shrine towards which all Muslims pray, is located—has any claim to bring recognized as caliph (Johnson, 1997, p. 154). Even such powerful Muslim dynasties as the Ottomans did not dare to call themselves caliphs until they had conquered Arabia (Karpas, 2001, p. 249) and taken control of the sacred mosque, or Masjid Al-Haram, wherein the Ka'aba lies.

However, even granted that the theology and historical knowledge of Islamist terrorists is shaky, that is not to prove that these strategies do not work with followers; history and theology serve as powerful motivators even if they are, frankly, wrongly interpreted. Consider the following passage from Bin Laden (2005):

We believe the US is directly responsible for those who were killed in Palestine, Lebanon, and Iraq. The mention of the US reminds us before anything else of the innocent children who were dismembered, their heads and arms cut off...They [the Americans] should have been sensitive to the fact that the *qibla* of the Muslims raises the emotion of the entire Muslim world (pp. 46–47)

Without discussing the truth value of Bin Laden's statement, it is still possible to recode the statement in terms of De la Corte's (2007) psychosocial principles (in

particular, principle five: “The decision to begin and sustain a terrorist campaign is always legitimized by an extreme ideology.” In fact, Bin Laden’s statement also connects to De la Corte’s first principle, that of influence: By deploying the trope of emotion, Bin Laden wished to draw funds and support from other Muslims. What matters is not the correctness of Bin Laden’s historical analysis but rather the way in which, as an appeal to radicalization, his work turns the raw matter of history and religion into a psychosocial appeal to emotion, complete with the charnel imagery of decapitation and mutilation. There is clearly something psychosocial behind the currents of historical and theological discourse: Perhaps some form of masochistic reproach for the dismembered children, but certain an appeal to influence (principle one) and to ideology (principle five).

Islamism seems to be a better candidate than history for explaining the kind of radicalization that leads to terrorism. Certainly, there has been some speculation that Al Qaeda considers such actions a kind of permissible deception, an act of blending in that is religiously justified (Pape, 2006) as a part of stealth warfare (Hunter, 1876). Here, too, the psychosocial principles of influence and ideology serve as complementary explanations to the theological explanation of Islamist behavior. Blending in, as the 9/11 terrorists did, by drinking and going to strip clubs (Thompson, 2004, p. 204) is a way of winning influence over potentially suspicious members of the public, and it is also an assertion of the sheer power of ideology. If an ideology is powerful enough to forgive *haram* (forbidden) behavior, then surely the value of that (psychosocial) ideology is at least equal to any theological justification of violence. Meanwhile, what is psychosocial about this behavior is precisely its communal aspect: Ten jihadis performing an action of this sort together makes it communal, almost like prayer, and layers a psychosocial aspect over the tactical one.

Another theory that tries to explain the link between radicalization and jihadism is the band of brothers theory. The theory was not given this name by Gerges (2006), who I think comes closest to proposing it, but I have chosen it as a description partly because it echoes Bin Laden’s own imagery of jihadis being a group of knights. *Band of Brothers* was, most recently, a hit TV show about U.S. military personnel in the Second World War, but the band of brothers I have in mind is rather different and is based on a peer

group influence theory of behavior. The point of making this observation is not to suggest that it is new; however, what is novel is the realization that what appears to be tactical peer group behavior from the outside is psychosocial—even familial—from the inside.

Consider the story of Ann Hansen, a Canadian terrorist who, along with four of her colleagues, bombed a Canadian missile factory in 1982. In her book, Hansen talks not only about her political consciousness but also about the ties that develop between her and the other members of what would become known as the Squamish Five. One of the most interesting things about these terrorists is that they are a *family*. Witness how Hansen (2001) describes the farewell between two members of the group: “Julie and Gerry stepped a few feet away from us and kissed each other fondly” (p. 234).

Hansen is a better writer than Osama Bin Laden, mainly because she is far more in touch with her feelings. I read Hansen’s book with Bin Laden in mind much of the time—not because there is any political or social connection between the two but because I read Hansen as providing the secret autobiography of both Osama Bin Laden and the international jihadi movement. Jihadis are neither educationally nor temperamentally equipped for self-disclosure, and for this reason, their work tends to be stylized and impersonal. Hansen, for example, is able to make us really *feel* her frustration with Canadian politics, whereas Bin Laden’s stilted writing style and refusal to tie his own life history in to his politics leaves anyone who is not already in sympathy with him cold.

To go back to the point, though, Hansen’s story is about how she and the Squamish Five come to be a family—a family that talks, thinks, eats, and even sleeps together. Hansen’s real family was never close to her, and most of her friends and acquaintances let her down. She spent much of her early adulthood being exploited and misunderstood. Thus, when she finds like-minded people, it is as if she has found an oasis. One instantly understands her attraction to this group, and her willingness to do many things to belong to it, until one realizes that the end result is going to be an act of terrorism.

Thus, radicalization can be said to be an intimate process overlaid with emotional and social significance—that is, a psychosocial process. Belonging to a family is

powerful; it is this instinct that accounts not only for biological families but also gangs, tribes, and nations (Ramakrishna, 2009). It is possible that radicalization of the Muslim into the jihadist is, in all its manifestations, the formation of a particular kind of dysfunctional family that shares the following characteristics. It is sometimes homosocial; that is, it is populated almost exclusively by men who, while not always or perhaps even frequently homosexual, are comfortable only with their own sex, and intimidated by, or angry at, women in real life and in the media.

This argument is largely new when applied to terrorism, although it has been suggested by Puar (2007) in the context of Islamism. The idea is that some forms of jihadi violence are gendered, and that these forms of violence can also be understood as psychosocial phenomena, that is, phenomena that also take place in the “in here” of thoughts, attitudes, and feelings and not just in the “out there” of tactics, strategy, and cold historical and theological reasoning (Puar). Later, I will discuss case studies of jihadis for whom violence, while not explicitly gendered, can be treated as a psychosocial case of what Puar called homonationalism, although I admit that the motivations of these jihadis can also, and complementarily, be understood as historical, theological, and peer group phenomena. The purpose is not to argue for the superiority of any one interpretation but to overlay De la Corte’s (2007) psychosocial principles on case studies of jihadi violence, which have seldom (if ever) been systematically coded from a psychosocial point of view and put into contact with classic psychosocial theories of violence and marginalization, such as those of Rosenberg (1960) and Festinger (1956).

### **C. GENDERED VIOLENCE AND JIHADISM**

The purpose of this section of the literature review is to offer some evidence for gendered theories of jihadi violence. The suggestion is not that all jihadi violence can be understood *qua* gendered violence, or that gendered violence is unique to Islam, but to add another helpful concept to the existing Islamist and historical theories of jihadi violence. All of these theories are conceptual strands that will later be pulled together from the psychosocial perspective; it should not be inferred that their discussion in the

literature review is a reification of any one theory. They do, however, need to be placed on the table now, so that when they are drawn up in the coding in Chapter IV, the reader is aware of the theoretical support for their existence.

To begin with, what is meant by the claim that a phenomenon is homosocial? Theorists have described the category of the homosocial as a form of behavior, thinking, and cultural experience (that is, a psychosocial gestalt) that creates a sphere from which women are absent (Weed & Schor, 1997). Homosocial behavior has deep roots across much of the Middle and Near East, the heartlands of Islam. In the Prophet Muhammad's lifetime, and by the sanction of verses revealed in the Qur'an, the intermingling of men and women was increasingly forbidden (Ali & Leaman, 2008). In practice, women were not enjoined to take part in the communal Friday prayer and, when they entered mosques, were relegated to the back, put behind curtains, or even directed to basements. This tradition continues unabated in mosques today (Joseph & Najmabadi, 2005). To note this fact is by no means to suggest that gender segregation is unique to Islam.

Indeed, Islam's homosocial nature takes its roots from the patriarchal form of life of the ancient Semites, of whom Arab Muslims are a branch. In Semitic life, such that led by the Hebrews in ancient times, the woman was considered ritually impure because of her menstruation (Maccoby, 1999). Thus, Jewish women were not encouraged to be around the Temple and played a diminished role in Jewish life as mothers, wives, daughters, and sisters only (Fonrobert, 2002). Islam's Judaic roots are widely acknowledged by scholars (Lewis, 2002); indeed, the first qibla of Islam was Jerusalem and the Qur'an, like the Torah, prescribes three prayers a day for Muslims (two more prayers were added in Muslim practice, but the Qur'an only mentions three). (Lewis, 2002).

Thus, the role of women in early Islam was partly due to the theological influence of Judaism. The Qur'an, again like the Torah, depicted women as being impure during their menstruation and commanded them to refrain from prayer at such times; additionally, any man who touched a menstruating woman was deemed to be ritually defiled, requiring a complex form of ablution to be once more ready to pray (Joseph & Najmabadi, 2005). However, in addition to these theological demotions of woman to the



status of an unclean and distracting object, there was also a strong cultural influence cast over Islam by nomadic Bedouin customs in which the role of the woman was to birth children and prepare food, while only men enjoyed mobility. All of these factors have led many scholars to define Islam and Muslim culture as deeply homosocial (Meri & Bacharach, 2006).

There are, however, two points to be made about the kind of homosocial behavior that has prevailed in the Muslim world after the seventh century. One point is that the homosocial has frequently been accompanied by the straightforwardly homosexual. Homosexual behavior was extremely widespread in the classical Muslim world (Habib, 2010). The second point is that, while enjoining the homosocial, the Qur'an is unequivocal about the sinfulness of actually homosexual behavior. Because the line between these two forms of behavior is so thin, there has subsequently been a great deal of anxiety and guilt among Muslim men in terms of their relationships with other men (El-Rouayheb, 2005). Some prominent Muslim clerics even issued religious rulings, or *fatwas*, that homosexual behavior was permissible on the grounds that a boy who had not yet grown a beard could count as a woman in religious law (Neill, 2009). Muslim history is packed with whimsical attempts to align homosexuality with sound Islam practice (Lewis, 2004), creating a great deal of cognitive dissonance and confusion in the process.

The first time that terrorism and homosexuality mixed overly in Islamic history was under Hassan as-Sabah, the so-called Old Man of the Mountain, who formed the sect of the Assassins in the eleventh century. Sabah took young men to his mountaintop castle, addicted them to opium and homosexual sex, and then withdrew these pleasures from them until they went out and served as assassins for him (Dughlt, 2008). For much of the rest of the Middle Ages, themes of homosexuality and military violence mixed closely in Islam. The Ottoman Turks created an elite all-male fighting corps known as the janissaries and forbade them to live married lives, which of course in an era of all-male barracks was an open invitation to homosexuality. As Edgerton (2000) colorfully described the situation, "By the mid-1600s, over 50,000 Janissaries lived as homosexuals under absolute military discipline" (p. 35). The reasoning behind this strategy was likely

that a cadre of men homosexually dedicated to each other and with no families would be more loyal than men with families and attachments to lovers outside the barracks.

These historical precedents are important because they demonstrate that ideas of violence, homosexuality / homosociality, and extreme violence have routinely coexisted in Muslim contexts for nearly a thousand years. In fact, the connection between homosexuality and the basic function of the state has warranted the name of *homonationalism* from Puar (2007). Here are states for by men, of men, and cemented by male desire for each other. It is, therefore, not so far-fetched that psychosocial echoes of these practices would have mutated and survived into the present day jihadi context. Jihadi radicalization begins as a male pull of other men away from women and from the influence of women. It is an exclusively male world, a fact that receives insufficient attention in scholarly and security analyses. While no jihadi has so far outed himself—which makes sense, as the punishment in Islam law for homosexuality is death (Lewis, 2002)—this psychosocial dynamic of homosociality deserves further consideration as an explanatory factor for radicalization.

#### **D. TOWARDS A PSYCHOSOCIAL UNDERSTANDING OF RADICALIZATION**

The discussion in the previous section of the literature review allows several principles to be tied together into a single perspective into Islamist radicalization: A psychosocial window. Consider Table 2.

Table 2. De la Corte's Psychosocial Principles of Terrorism

<b>Principle</b>	<b>Description</b>
1	First psychosocial principle: Terrorism must not be seen as a syndrome but as a method of social and political influence.
2	Second principle: The attributes of terrorists are shaped by processes of social interaction.
3	Third principle: Terrorist organizations can be analyzed by analogy with other social movements.
4	Fourth principle: Terrorism only is possible when terrorists have access to certain resources.

Principle	Description
5	Fifth principle: The decision to begin and sustain a terrorist campaign is always legitimized by an extreme ideology.
6	Sixth principle: Every terrorist campaign involves strategic goals but the rationality which terrorists apply to their violence is imperfect.
7	Seventh principle: The activity of terrorists partly reflects the internal features of their organizations

The second principle should actually come first in the causal chain. The first step of radicalization is the process of, as I shall argue, interaction, regardless of whether such interaction is gregarious, homosocial, rational, etc. The second step is the formation of a shared bond into something greater, an actual movement (principle three) that creates a spurious ideology (step four) to legitimize itself. The third step is the deployment of this movement into influence (principle one) through violence (principle six). The third chapter, on methodology, I will then demonstrate how the theory can be applied to case studies, which comprise Chapter IV, in ways that allow for the mapping of each of De la Corte's principles on to a set of jihadi motivations. In this way, a new psychosocial perspective on jihadi violence emerges, one that calls attention to the psychosocial dimensions of what have previously been taken to be historical, theological, or political phenomena.

In grounded theory approaches to qualitative study, theory emerges from data (Hansen, 2008). It is therefore premature to offer an explicit theoretical framework for the psychosocial perspective on jihadi radicalization. However, the point to be made is that a richer understanding of jihadi radicalization as possible as long as external components of grievance, tactics, history, enfranchisement, and theology are interwoven with the internal components of individual and group psychology, and how it has played out in special jihadi contexts—for example, the context of homonationalism in some instances, and the context of ideological resistance to the U.S. in others. In doing so, I will develop a new medium of discursive analysis of jihadism, not a new interpretation of jihadism itself.

There is, however, a gap between the De la Corte's (2007) principles, useful as they are, and the application of psychosocial theory to cases of homegrown jihadism. The

main drawback is that De la Corte's theory is underdetermined; it does not explain, for example, how the very same process of social interaction could turn one young American Muslim into a jihadi but leave another unaffected. Therefore, a richer and more explanatory theoretical framework needs to be attached to De la Corte's seven principles, a framework that can explain and account for the dividing lines between the jihadi and the jihadi. Such a framework can be adduced from the works of Rosenberg (1960) and Festinger (1956).

#### **E. UNDERLYING THEORIES OF PSYCHOSOCIAL CONTEXTS AND VIOLENCE**

Here is Rosenberg's (1960) theory of identity and behavior formation:

When the affective and cognitive components of an attitude are mutually consistent, the attitude is in a stable state; when the affective and cognitive components are mutually inconsistent...the attitude is in an unstable state and will undergo spontaneous reorganizing activity until such activity eventuates either in (a) attainment of affective-cognitive consistency or (b) the placing of an "irreconcilable" inconsistency beyond the range of active awareness. (p. 20)

This general theory of psychic consistency coexists nearly with other psychosocial theories: Festinger's (1956) theory of cognitive dissonance and also with the theory of stigma, which has been espoused by several theorists. Festinger's work concluded that when people either know or fear that they are wrong, they will at first go to great lengths to avoid facing with this fact. Stigma theory suggests that one way of avoiding the pain of knowing that one is wrong is to split off into two selves. This act of splitting reduces the stigma that one feels, lowers cognitive dissonance, and also achieves—temporarily—Rosenberg's state of attitude alignment: When the affective and cognitive components of an attitude are mutually consistent, the attitude is in a stable state; when the affective and cognitive.

Following this model, the "spontaneous reorganizing activity" mentioned by Rosenberg (1960) is actually a flowchart of possibilities, beginning with pure attitude (either affective or cognitive) and ending in pure behavior (e.g., jihadism). In other

words, terrorism can be conceived at the personal level of a person trying to manage dissonance, stigma, and inconsistency between affect and cognition. The original graphic in Figure 1 lends some visual clarity to the theory:

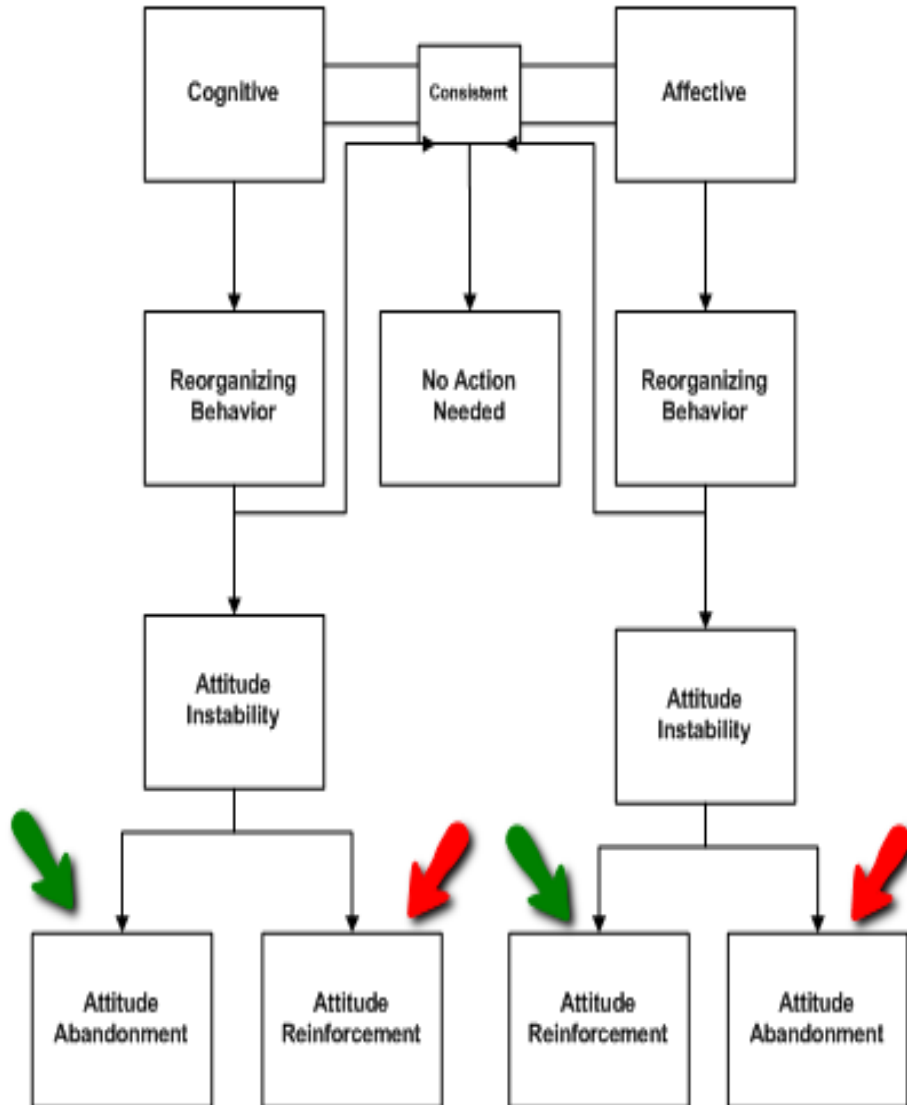


Figure 1. A Psychosocial Model Based on Rosenberg's (1960) Construct of Inconsistency

Building on Rosenberg's model, it is assumed that all behaviors (including terroristic ones) begin as two kinds of attitudes, affective (emotional) and cognitive (rational). Rosenberg's theory of personality is that, when two dimensions of attitudes on

a particular topic are in sync with each other, a person will take no special “reorganizing” action to balance them. For example, a man who both knows that Islam enjoins peace and feels that Islam enjoins peace will be consistent on this topic and will not suffer cognitive load or psychic stress as a consequence. On the other hand, someone who cognitively understands that the Qur’an forbids terrorism but who affectively feels that terrorism is called for as a legitimate political and military response to perceived imperialism is in a state of attitude instability that, according to Rosenberg, can only end when one of the conflicting attitudes is either abandoned or reinforced beyond the point of ambiguity.

Cognitive dissonance refers to the subjective psychological state of a person who believes *A* to be true while presented with convincing evidence that *not-A* is true. Festinger (1956) noted that people experiencing cognitive dissonance had one of two choices: They could either conclusively accept one of the conflicting beliefs (resulting in consonance), or they could continue to live in a state of dissonance, which would exact a psychic toll. Festinger’s greatest empirical result was his discovery that, when confronted with data that had been disproven, many so-called true believers would actually redouble the intensity of their belief in the deposed paradigm. This result explained the phenomenon of believers in failed prophecies, who retained their beliefs in the face of all disconfirmation.

As Cook, Noyes, and Masakowski (2007) have it, “the psychological state created by uncertainty is very painful” (p. 45). According to both Festinger (1956) and Rosenberg (1960), human beings will tend to manage this pain through psychosocial means. On a personal psychological level, as Nordgren, van Harreveld, and van der Pligt (2004) argued, “people spontaneously engage in biased information processing in order to resolve their ambivalence” (p. 252). On a social level, people will associate with others who hold the same beliefs as a means of shutting out the possible pain of actually being wrong about their belief (Festinger). Thus, people who face uncertainty tend to engage in personal forms of biased information processing and band together with others who do not threaten their beliefs. This statement is not controversial; it has been repeatedly demonstrated, first by Festinger’s (1958) experimental confirmation of his 1956 results

and by subsequent social psychologists. The real question is whether the theory has applicability to the eruption of *jihadi* violence (as a subset of other kinds of violence).

It is here that Rosenberg (1960) is more helpful than Festinger (1956). Festinger's work did not extend to actual physical violence, partly because Festinger found violence to be a rare kind of solution to problems of ambiguity, self-doubt, and general personality turbulence. However, Rosenberg was more convinced than Festinger that violence was a common solution to problems of ambiguity, specifically cognitive-affective ambiguity. By engaging in a violence action, Rosenberg reasoned, it was possible for a formerly conflicted person to affirm one aspect of their psyche over the other. Thus, according to Rosenberg, violence can also be understood as a means of psychic release that frees the doer of violence from ambiguity, doubt, and indecision.

The red arrows in Figure 1 represent this kind of violence, which comes as an alternative to attitude abandonment (indicated by green arrows). At some point, Rosenberg (1960) argued, most people living in psychic ambiguity will find a way to align their personality by getting rid of, or somehow modifying, one of the clashing beliefs. However, some minority of people will not be able to do so successfully. These people have two options. They can keep living with the psychic pain that comes with ambiguity and contradiction (see Nordgren, van Harreveld, & van der Pligt, 2004), or they can try to use violence to transcend ambiguity and contradiction.

It is here that the true usefulness of the psychosocial stance should become apparent. For the psychosocial stance is a meta-interpretation; it can account for all kinds of ambiguities, doubts, and beliefs. The psychosocial theory of Rosenberg (1960), for example, can account for many different kinds of *jihadi* radicalization, as Chapter IV will demonstrate in more depth. For example, because Rosenberg's theory is agnostic about the content of ambiguity, it can account for historical, political, personal, ideological, and theological grievances without any loss in explanatory power. All that the theory requires, and assumes, is the presence of: (a) psychosocial conflict, (b) attempts at psychosocial resolution, and (c) failure at both resolution and the ability to keep living with a lack of resolution. Once these three aspects of a case study are demonstrated, Rosenberg (1960), with theoretical backup from Festinger (1956), adds the explanatory

capacity that was missing in De la Corte's (2007) theory and makes it possible to understand and break down the radicalization process step by step. The application of this method will become clear in Chapter III.

### **1. The Importance of Degradation**

Davies (1965) argued that "degradation produces revolution" (p. 95). Davies, a scholar whose subject of study is revolution, took as his research question the issue of why a revolution took place at a specific point in time rather than sooner or later. His answer sheds a lot of light not only on revolution but also on jihadism. The first part of the answer has to do with what creates a revolutionary mood: "The crucial factor is the vague or specific fear that ground gained over a long period of time will be quickly lost" (p. 98). The next part of the answer takes up the issue of what turns a mood into a set of concrete actions, like the storming of a building or the planting of a bomb, which are in the post-radicalization stages of De la Corte's (2007) principles. Davies lists a number of factors, all of which have to be in place: there has to be instrumentality (i.e., an ability to act) (for example, there have to be enough volunteers for suicide bombing, and enough IED components to wage a bombing campaign); there has to be a belief that the act of terrorism can succeed and, indeed, there have to be "rising expectations" for the success of the movement (pp. 98–99). Last, but not least, the opposing force—typically the state—cannot be too strong, or it will simply wipe the movement out (p. 99).

The concept of degradation looms so large in the coding of jihadi narratives that it does not even need special analysis. Both Faisal Shahzad and Adam Gadahn, the jihadis chosen for further analysis in chapter four, are convinced that Islam is less than it was; previous Muslims were more pious, and previous Muslim states were more powerful. Shahzad in particular was deeply traumatized by the knowledge of Islam's lost power. At any rate, even though degradation is not specifically invoked in the coding, it ought to be kept in mind as a factor in explaining why jihadis become radicalized.



## **F. CONCLUSION**

The psychosocial interpretation of terrorism, as De la Corte (2007) presented it, is precisely that: an interpretation. It can coexist with, and indeed lend value to, other interpretations; in this way, the psychosocial interpretation can be described as a meta-interpretation or meta-analysis of jihadism. This literature review has demonstrated that the main themes of jihadi violence can be placed into a wrapper of psychosocial interpretation and has indeed listed what these themes are. It has not been claimed that any theme (such as homosocial behavior versus historical grievance) is explanatorily superior to another; yet, the main forms of support for each theory have been presented, and will later be woven into a psychosocial perspective that is capable of accommodating and adding value to all of these theories without trying to reify any one of them.

The next chapter, that of the methodology, will examine how case studies can be constructed to illuminate the various aspects of psychosocial interpretation of jihadism and Chapter IV will consist of the case studies, as well as their coding. Many of the themes first encountered in the literature review will recur in the methodology.

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### III. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the discussion of the methodology is to explain and defend the means by which the analytical case studies laid out in chapter four will be conducted. There are two components of the discussion of methodology: (a) a general explanation of the case study method and how its validity and reliability can be defended and (b) a specific analysis of the psychosocial means of analysis that will be deployed in the case studies.

#### A. THE CASE STUDY METHOD: A METHODOLOGICAL OVERVIEW

One way to understand how case studies function in research is to start from the very top:

Table 3. Differences between Quantitative and Qualitative Research (Creswell 2009, p. 56)

<b>Philosophical Foundations</b>	<b>Qualitative Research Designs</b>	<b>Quantitative Research Designs</b>
Ontology (perceptions of reality)	Researchers assume that multiple, subjectively derived realities can coexist.	Researchers assume that a single, objective world exists.
Epistemology (roles for the researcher)	Researchers commonly assume that they must interact with their studied phenomena.	Researchers assume that they are independent from the variables under study.
Axiology (researchers' values)	Researchers overtly act in a value-laden and biased fashion.	Researchers overtly act in a value-free and unbiased manner.
Rhetoric (language styles)	Researchers often use personalized, informal, and context-laden language.	Researchers most often use impersonal, formal, and rule-based text.
Procedures (as employed in research)	Researchers tend to apply induction, multivariate, and multiprocess interactions, following context-laden methods.	Researchers tend to apply deduction, limited cause-and-effect relationships, with context-free methods.

As a method of research, the case study format is qualitative. It assumes that there are multiple, subjective worlds; relies on a model of researcher interaction with and subjective interpretation of the available data; does not rule out value and bias in the formation of interpretation; is expressed in context-laden and often informal language; and is inferential and narrative rather than deductive and quantifiable. As a format, the case study chooses only a few subjects for study. In doing so, the researcher sacrifices breadth of understanding for depth of understanding. Dilating on a handful of cases offers the ability to go deeper into the research phenomena and to more meaningfully illuminate the research phenomenon. While case studies are not held to be generalizable in the same way as quantitative research, they offer interpretive and explanatory advantages; they can illuminate a phenomenon from the inside in a way that quantitative research cannot.

Case studies involving humans operate on two levels. First, such studies are phenomenological, meaning that they attempt to see reality from within the subject's point of view. However, case studies are also analytical, meaning that they do not uncritically accept a subject's point of view, but subject it to closer examination and critique. This approach distinguishes the case study from a narrative of lives qualitative methodology, in which the subject's own narrative is considered sacrosanct.

The bias inherent in case studies can be reduced but not eliminated. Research ethics demand the disclosure of potential biases in the case study method and explanations of how bias was reduced in the study. Furthermore, the interpretive system involved in a case study—in this case, the explanatory framework that is rooted in the paradigm of psychosocial radicalization and the specific prisms of homosociality, ideology, and influence—should be closely and carefully explained, so that the reader can evaluate the soundness of the interpretive system and come to other conclusions, if warranted. In other words, the case study format calls on researchers to discuss and defend alternative explanations as well. The ethics of the case study method depend on whether data is being collected from living subjects and whether, if data is collected from dead subjects, the researcher has not distorted or cherry-picked the data (a point that also goes to case study validity and reliability). All of the ways in which the current case

study satisfies the best practices of the case study methodology will be examined in Chapter IV. The purpose of this section has been to disclose the main characteristics of the case study format.

## B. THE ROLE OF CODING

Table 4 is an application of grounded theory coding to a statement made by Bin Laden.

Table 4. Example of Grounded Theory Coding

Original Data	Coding
We believe the U.S. is directly responsible for those who were killed in Palestine, Lebanon, and Iraq. The mention of the U.S. reminds us before anything else of the innocent children who were dismembered, their head and arms cut off...They [the Americans] should have been sensitive to the fact that the <i>qibla</i> of the Muslims raises the emotion of the entire Muslim world.	<i>Extra-local influences on psychosocial development.</i>  <i>Radicalization as revenge for real or imagined slights.</i>  <i>Reciprocal radicalization: If you are radical, we will also be radical.</i>

According to Hansen (2008), grounded theory is “the systematic generation of theory from data that has been empirically collected and analyzed” (p. 3). Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2008) explained, “Researchers conduct initial grounded theory coding by comparing incidents or by coding word by word, line by line, or paragraph by paragraph...The line-by-line grounded theory coding goes deeper into the phenomenon and attempts to explicate it” (p. 164).

Thus, Table 3 demonstrates the main method of qualitative analysis to be employed in this study. By coding data about radicalization—both in primary and secondary sources—a larger set of psychosocial explanations will emerge. The goal of coding is to determine how, or whether, De la Corte’s main psychosocial themes of terrorism emerge from the data:

Table 5. [reprinted] De la Corte's Psychosocial Principles of Terrorism

Principle	Description
1	First psychosocial principle: Terrorism must not be seen as a syndrome but as a method of social and political influence.
2	Second principle: The attributes of terrorists are shaped by processes of social interaction.
3	Third principle: Terrorist organizations can be analyzed by analogy with other social movements.
4	Fourth principle: Terrorism only is possible when terrorists have access to certain resources.
5	Fifth principle: The decision to begin and sustain a terrorist campaign is always legitimized by an extreme ideology.
6	Sixth principle: Every terrorist campaign involves strategic goals but the rationality which terrorists apply to their violence is imperfect.
7	Seventh principle: The activity of terrorists partly reflects the internal features of their organizations

Of particular interest in this study are Principles 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6. Principle 4 is not being considered because it is possible to become radicalized and committed to terrorism without having thought to what resources are available to actually execute terrorism (Pape, 2006). Principle 7 is also omitted, because it encompasses the activity of terrorists whereas radicalization can fail to result in actual terrorist activity (for example, when a planned attack fails). Given the strategy of grounded theory that is being used to organize and explore the data, these are the main themes that will be sought in the transcripts of radicalization narratives.

Table 6. Main Themes of the Psychosocial Theory of Terrorism

Principle	Themes
1	Desire to exert (a) social and (b) political influence—e.g., over friends, community, family, country, city, world. Look for psychological characteristics such as anxiety, megalomania, need for control, inability to tolerate ambiguity, etc.
2	Radicalization emerging from social interaction—e.g., contacts in mosques, radical friends, visiting radical Web sites, living in countries with large populations of proselytizing radicals. Look for links between social interaction and formation of the individual radical's psyche.

Principle	Themes
3	Radicalization as a social movement—e.g., it will have a platform, peer pressure, an orthodoxy, self-reinforcement, penalties for leaving, and other aspects of social movements. Again, look for links between social interaction and formation of the individual radical's psyche.
4	Radicalization as ideology. Look for aspects of the radical's psyche and social circle that promote orthodoxy, reject heterodoxy, and surrender decision-making power to ideas.
5	Radicalization as rationality gone wrong. Look for psychological pathologies: Irrationality, magical thinking, circular reasoning, logical fallacies, etc.

Table 5 is, in essence, the bridge between De la Corte's (2007) theory, the coding strategy, and the data. It demonstrates what kind of themes need to be found in the grounded theory coding to justify the application of De la Corte's principles to cases of homegrown jihadi radicalization.

It only remains to explain how Rosenberg's (1960) theory of psychosocial conflict is to be mapped on to De la Corte's (2007) principles. Table 6 is a demonstration of exactly how this goal has been accomplished.

Table 7. Applying Rosenberg (1960) to De la Corte (2007)

Psychosocial Principle	Search for Themes	Resolution v. Turbulence
First psychosocial principle: Terrorism must not be seen as a syndrome but as a method of social and political influence.	Desire to exert (a) social and (b) political influence (e.g., over friends, community, family, country, city, world). Look for psychological characteristics such as anxiety, megalomania, need for control, inability to tolerate ambiguity, etc.	Does psychic conflict exist? How is that conflict managed (e.g., biased information processing, groupthink)? What is the resolution of the conflict?
Second principle: The attributes of terrorists are shaped by processes of social interaction.	Radicalization emerging from social interaction (e.g., contacts in mosques, radical friends, visiting radical Web sites, living in	Does psychic conflict exist? How is that conflict managed (e.g., biased information processing, groupthink)?

<b>Psychosocial Principle</b>	<b>Search for Themes</b>	<b>Resolution v. Turbulence</b>
	countries with large populations of proselytizing radicals). Look for links between social interaction and formation of the individual radical's psyche.	What is the resolution of the conflict?
Third principle: Terrorist organizations can be analyzed by analogy with other social movements.	Radicalization as a social movement (e.g., it will have a platform, peer pressure, an orthodoxy, self-reinforcement, penalties for leaving, and other aspects of social movements). Again, look for links between social interaction and formation of the individual radical's psyche.	Does psychic conflict exist? How is that conflict managed (e.g., biased information processing, groupthink)? What is the resolution of the conflict?
Fifth principle: The decision to begin and sustain a terrorist campaign is always legitimized by an extreme ideology.	Radicalization as ideology. Look for aspects of the radical's psyche and social circle that promote orthodoxy, reject heterodoxy, and surrender decision-making power to ideas.	Does psychic conflict exist? How is that conflict managed (e.g., biased information processing, groupthink)? What is the resolution of the conflict?
Sixth principle: Every terrorist campaign involves strategic goals but the rationality which terrorists apply to their violence is imperfect.	Radicalization as rationality gone wrong. Look for psychological pathologies: Irrationality, magical thinking, circular reasoning, logical fallacies, etc.	Does psychic conflict exist? How is that conflict managed (e.g., biased information processing, groupthink)? What is the resolution of the conflict?

Table 6 is the key instrument that will enable Chapter IV's coding of homegrown jihadism as demonstrated in the case studies of Faisal Shahzad, Adam Gadahn, and other homegrown terrorists. Table 6 contains the specific psychosocial principles, their themes, and their theoretical underpinning (resolution versus turbulence) that explain the mounting tempo of radicalization for the true behavior and also why radicalization fails



for others. Table 6 helps to place the coding into a structure that is at once transparent and justified by both the literature and methodology of this study, such that the findings of the study will have more validity when organized according to this table.

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## **IV. CASE STUDIES**

There are only two case studies in this chapter: Faisal Shahzad and Adam Gadahn. These cases were chosen for specific reasons that ought to be explained in some depth. First, both Shahzad and Gadahn were formally and informally associated with jihadi movements for quite some time. Second, Shahzad and Gadahn represent forking paths on Rosenberg's (1960) theory of personality integration. Shahzad, also known as the Times Square Bomber, plotted to kill as many American civilians as possible in a bomb attack, but Gadahn has, so far, only been a radio propagandist. Another difference is that, although both are homegrown jihadis, Shahzad is of Pakistani extraction whereas Gadahn was born to American parents of Jewish background. Still, both men fell prey to the allure of radicalization. Choosing only two case studies of homegrown jihadism makes it possible to drill down to a level of detail that is not possible to achieve with a larger mass of studies. Also, the choice of two contrasting cases demonstrates how the insertion of Rosenberg's theoretical apparatus differentiates between radicalization that leads to violence and radicalization that is resolved short of violence.

### **A. FAISAL SHAHZAD**

Building on De la Corte (2007), there are five psychological principles to be sought in the case of Faisal Shahzad: social and political influence, social interaction, analogy with other social movements, extreme ideology, and imperfect rationality applied to violence. The coding of statements from, and about, Shahzad, will detect each of these themes and then explain how, in Rosenberg's (1960) conceptual vocabulary, the psychosocial conflicts underlying these themes came about, were applied to a process of resolution, and ultimately led to a violent break. The data from the coding will come from a combination of Faisal Shahzad's court testimony and from journalistic and personal accounts of his radicalization.

Faisal Shahzad was born in Pakistan to a high-ranking former officer in the Pakistani Air Force. Shahzad's father was, by all accounts, a secular person, and so was Shahzad. Shahzad, while nominally a Muslim, did not appear to be a fundamentalist

during his time in Pakistan. When he went to study in the United States in 1999, he apparently visited nightclubs and engaged in secular pursuits.

When Mr. Shahzad started classes there [in the U.S.], more than a third of the college's students were foreigners—15 of them from Pakistan. Mr. Shahzad stood out. He walked with a confident air, showing off his gym-honed muscles in tight T-shirts. He carried the air of a privileged upbringing, coming off as aloof and, at times, snobbish. While the Pakistani students stuck together, playing cricket and collecting free meals at the campus mosque, Mr. Shahzad had a wider circle of friends and a fuller social calendar. A skilled cook, he drew students to his dorm room with the scent of his simmering lobia, a Pakistani lentil dish. He worked out obsessively and, on weekends, hit New York City's Bengali-theme nightclubs. He loved women, recalled a former classmate, and "could drink anyone under the table." He showed little interest in Islam. (Elliott, Tavernise, & Barnard, 2010)

Shahzad was a classic study in homegrown radicalization. A naturalized U.S. citizen, Shahzad was schooled and employed in the United States and later came to be married to a U.S.-born woman of Pakistani extraction. As the extract from Elliott et al. disclosed, Shahzad appeared to be living a comfortable and indeed hedonistic life, with no hint of either Islamism or jihadism in him. However, less than five years from the period of Shahzad's life portrayed by Elliott et al., he attempted to bomb Times Square.

Table 8. The Court Statement of Faisal Shahzad and Coding

Narrative	Coding
I hope that the judge and the Court will listen to me before they sentence me. In the name of Allah, the most gracious, the most merciful, this is but one life. If I am given a thousand lives, I will sacrifice them all for the sake of Allah fighting this cause, defending our lands, making the word of Allah supreme over any religion or system. We Muslims don't abide by human-made laws, because they are always corrupt. And I had a firsthand experience when on the second day of my arrest I asked for the Miranda. And the FBI denied it to me for two weeks, effecting harm to my kids and family, and I was forced to sign those Mirandas. .. and so it's very clear for us Muslims, either we are with the mujahideen or we are with	<p><i>Desire for sociopolitical influence: Wants to be heard.</i></p> <p><i>Influence: Aware of audience.</i></p> <p><i>Ideology of jihad.</i></p> <p><i>Imperfect rationality: Defends 'there' by attacking innocents 'here.'</i></p> <p><i>Third person: Speaking for larger social group.</i></p>

Narrative	Coding
crusading losing Christians. There is no in between. Blessed the immigrants and the leader Sheikh Usama Bin Laden, who will be known as no less than Saladin of the 21st century crusade and blessed be those who give him asylum.	<i>References social interaction with other jihadis.</i> <i>No in between: Shahzad is now freed of ambiguity.</i>

What happened between Shahzad's entry into the United States and his transformation into a radical? A good place to look for interpretations is through Shahzad's own narrative, as spoken at his sentencing in a U.S. federal court. The comments on the right side of the table are forms of grounding theory coding, which call attention to the main themes in the data and prepare the way for more explanation and analysis. In the case of Shahzad's court statement, all five of De la Corte's (2007) psychosocial themes of radicalization are present, in addition to a statement that recalls Rosenberg's (1960) theory of personality. Before putting all of this data into a format that shows the trajectory of Shahzad's psychosocial process, however, Shahzad's story should be completed.

The full trajectory of what happened to Shahzad between 1999, the year of his first arrival in the United States, and 2010, the year of his arrest, is not well known. There is only a cloud of details. Shahzad, the youngest child of a very wealthy family, was an average student and an average person with a squarely middle-class job. In his photographs before the arrest, Shahzad dresses well and at one point bought a Mercedes. Shahzad was in an arranged marriage in 2004. In the existing photographs of Shahzad with his wife, he is holding himself at an angle away from her while she is the one leaning more closely into him. At some point by 2006, Shahzad had ceased to be on good terms with his wife. He demanded, first, that she cover herself and remain at home instead of working. Later, when she refused, he gave her an ultimatum: To return to Pakistan with him or to go her own way. Actually, Shahzad phrased this ultimatum as a *fait accompli*, because he called his wife, Huma, from the airport. He gave her no realistic chance at actually coming to Pakistan with him. Soon afterwards, Shahzad went to Pakistan while Huma went to Saudi Arabia with the two children she had from Shahzad. Shahzad himself went for terrorist training in the federally administered tribal areas

(FATA) of Pakistan. After several months in Pakistan, Shahzad returned to the United States in order to execute his planned bombing of Times Square.

At some point after 2000 and before 2004, Shahzad become more active with other Muslims on campus, and by 2006 was a full-fledged participant on jihad-oriented Web boards. This aspect of his life only became apparent later. The key document from this time was a long e-mail message that Shahzad wrote to such a board on the topic of jihad. This e-mail has been reproduced and coded in Table 8. Since the e-mail was quite long, only certain parts of it have been excerpted and coded.

Table 9. The E-Mail of Faisal Shahzad and Coding

E-Mail	Coding
If something from what I wrote doesn't correspond with Quran and Sunnah then I renounce it and I ask Allah's forgiveness due to my ignorance...	
17 year old Mohammad bin Qasam attacked the Sub-continent Pak-o-Hind and defeated infidel ruler Raja Dahir because there came to him news of a Muslim women who was raped!!! and today our beloved Prophet (Katimun Nabieen Mohammad al-Ameen) PBUH has been disrespected and disgraced in the whole world and we just sit and watch with shame and sorrow and most of us don't even care...	<i>Historical, political, and theological roots of jihad cited.</i>
He blesses us with many blessing and every time we thank God but do not follow His teachings. And if He tests us with hard time our heart hardened with bitterness towards Him rather than humiliating and starts questioning and blaming Allah...	<i>Is Shahzad also referring to his own "testing"?</i> <i>Ambiguity: Pain is also from God.</i>
Why do you have to follow Democracy (Human made Laws) if you're already given Laws revealed from Allah, Quran and Sunnah. Khilafath is what we Muslim ruled the world with, weren't we successful in world then? America, the source of democracy let's Pakistan rule by dictatorship?? Hello!!no... oh wait..... yeah, DAHHH..	<i>Ambiguity: Choice between human and divine law.</i> <i>Ambiguity: Why are followers of the one true religion so weak and powerless, even in their own countries?</i> <i>An explanation for weakness.</i> <i>One way out of weakness: Making a statement about jihad.</i>

<b>E-Mail</b>	<b>Coding</b>
My beloved and peaceful Ummah majority of us think that we are too weak against the west or foreign forces... Where will the help from God come if you were of equal power?... Does your heart still pumps or is it dead?	

The psychosocial perspective on Shahzad's radicalization does not claim to be able to detect whether Shahzad became radicalized because of ideological or theological reasons, or possibly simply out of frustration at the life he was living. However, the psychosocial perspective is a very useful means of locating the multiple psychic conflicts in Shahzad's life and following them through to Shahzad's inability to reach resolution. Table 9 demonstrates a prism of psychosocial trajectories.

Table 10. Overall Psychosocial Coding of Shahzad's Experiences

<b>Psychosocial Principle</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Resolution v. Turbulence</b>
First psychosocial principle: Terrorism must not be seen as a syndrome but as a method of social and political influence.	The desire to exert social and political influence can become great in individuals who feel what Shahzad's e-mail called weakness.	Shahzad tried to be strong but failed: His career advancement stalled, he married a woman not of his choosing, and he remained the youngest son of a very powerful father.
Second principle: The attributes of terrorists are shaped by processes of social interaction.	Shahzad began to interact with like-minded radicals.	Radicals gave Shahzad an echo chamber and perhaps a way to deflect his frustration against life in America into a hatred of America itself, but not a way to be 'strong.'
Third principle: Terrorist organizations can be analyzed by analogy with other social movements.	Shahzad linked his own jihad to historical and theological themes in Islamic history.	Shahzad contrasted the strength of classic jihadis with the weakness of current Muslims.

<b>Psychosocial Principle</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Resolution v. Turbulence</b>
Fifth principle: The decision to begin and sustain a terrorist campaign is always legitimized by an extreme ideology.	Shahzad located what he considered an Islamist ideology to justify jihadi terrorism.	Shahzad could not resolve the paradox of why even jihadis failed; why did God's help never seem to come?
Sixth principle: Every terrorist campaign involves strategic goals but the rationality which terrorists apply to their violence is imperfect.	Shahzad wanted to express his strength by striking a blow at the symbolic heart of American life.	No conflict; in framing this act, Shahzad was providing the very assurance and help from God that did not, as he claimed in his e-mail, ever flow to passive people.

Table 9 demonstrates how, at each stage of the radicalization process, Shahzad was faced with a psychic ambiguity that could not be resolved. Shahzad was not able to embrace one perspective or the other: He simultaneously saw and appreciated the full weakness of Muslims, yet he believed wholeheartedly that Muslims were promised help by God and deserved to rule the world. He understood his own failure while having wanted success. He was aware of the success of early jihadis while cognizant of the failure of the current generation of jihadis (and Muslims in general). All of these ambiguities were particularly intense because they mirrored Shahzad's own psychosocial state. As someone caught between success (such as that of his family) and great weakness (such as the mounting of his U.S. debts and inability to achieve much professionally, leading to the foreclosure of his home), Shahzad may have projected some of the psychic pain generated by his own state into a larger psychodrama involving the stage of jihadism. Regardless of how this process took place, or whether one aspect of it (such as theology) was stronger than other, what matters from the psychosocial perspective is that Jihad could only achieve what Rosenberg (1960) considered closure by violently asserting his *feeling* that victory belonged to him / the Muslims / God as a way of fighting against his *knowledge* that he had lost in life, his coreligionists were weak and downfallen, and the help promised by his God had not come. In this way, Shahzad finally ended the clash between feelings and thoughts that, according to Rosenberg, is the beginning of ambiguity and psychic pain.



## B. ADAM GADAHN

An excellent introduction to the radicalization process of Adahm Gadahn, the young Californian who now works as a radio propagandist for Al Qaeda based in Pakistan, is through his own conversion story, posted at:

Table 11. Adam Gadahn's Conversion Story and Coding

Conversion Story	Coding
My first seventeen years have been a bit different than the youth experienced by most Americans. I grew up on an extremely rural goat ranch in Western Riverside County, California, where my family raises on average 150 to 200 animals for milk, cheese, and meat. My father is a halal butcher [a butcher who slaughters in an Islamic manner -ed.] and supplies to an Islamic Food Mart a few blocks from the Islamic Center in downtown Los Angeles.	<i>Awareness of difference from other Americans.</i>
My father was raised agnostic or atheist, but he became a believer in One God when he picked up a Bible left on the beach. He once had a number of Muslim friends, but they've all moved out of California now. My mother was raised Catholic, so she leans towards Christianity (although she, like my father, disregards the Trinity). I and my siblings were/are home-schooled, and as you may know, most home-school families are Christian. In the last 8 or so years, we have been involved with some home-schooling support groups, thus acquainting me with fundamentalist Christianity. It was an eye-opening experience. Setting aside the blind dogmatism and charismatic wackiness, it was quite a shock to me when I realized that these people, in their prayers, were actually praying TO JESUS. You see, I had always believed that Jesus (pbuh) was, at the very most, the Son of God (since that is what the Bible mistranslates "Servant of	<i>Locates early connection with Islam.</i>
	<i>Gadahn locates theological points in common between Islam and his parents' form of Christianity.</i>
	<i>"Blind dogmatism and charismatic wackiness" as possible projection of jihadism on to Christianity as well.</i>
	<i>Questions rationality of Christian belief as</i>

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**Conversion Story**

God” as). As I learned that belief in the Trinity, something I find absolutely ridiculous, is considered by most Christians to be a prerequisite for salvation, I gradually realized I could not be a Christian.

In the meantime, I had become obsessed with demonic Heavy Metal music, something the rest of my family (as I now realize, rightfully so) was not happy with. My entire life was focused on expanding my music collection. I eschewed personal cleanliness and let my room reach an unbelievable state of disarray. My relationship with my parents became strained, although only intermittently so. I am sorry even as I write this.

Earlier this year, I began to listen to the apocalyptic ramblings of Christian radio’s “prophecy experts.” Their paranoid espousal of various conspiracy theories, rabid support of Israel and religious Zionism, and fiery preaching about the “Islamic Threat” held for me a strange fascination. Why? Well, I suppose it was simply the need I was feeling to fill that void I had created for myself. In any case, I soon found that the beliefs these evangelists held, such as Original Sin and the Infallibility of “God’s Word”, were not in agreement with my theological ideas (not to mention the Bible) and I began to look for something else to hold onto.

The turning point, perhaps, was when I moved in with my grandparents here in Santa Ana, the county seat of Orange, California. My grandmother, a computer whiz, is hooked up to America Online and I have been scooting the information superhighway since January. But when I moved in, with the intent of finding a job

**Coding**

*a gateway to leaving the religion.*

*Explores deviant lifestyle.*

*“Strange fascination” with Islam: Does Gadahn chose Islam for shock value?*

*Confession of a drifting, wandering person.*

*Internet as a gateway to radicalization.*

*Rational bases for attraction to Islam.*

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### Conversion Story

(easier said than done), I begin to visit the religion folders on AOL and the Usenet newsgroups, where I found discussions on Islam to be the most intriguing. You see, I discovered that the beliefs and practices of this religion fit my personal theology and intellect as well as basic human logic. Islam presents God not as an anthropomorphic being but as an entity beyond human comprehension, transcendent of man, independent and undivided. Islam has a holy book that is comprehensible to a layman, and there is no papacy or priesthood that is considered infallible in matters of interpretation: all Muslims are free to reflect and interpret the book given a sufficient education. Islam does not believe that all men are doomed to Hell unless they simply accept that God (apparently unable to forgive otherwise) magnanimously allowed Himself to be tortured on a cross to enable Him to forgive all human beings who just believe that He allowed Himself to be tortured on a cross... Islam does not believe in a Chosen Race. And on and on...

As I began reading English translations of the Qur'an, I became more and more convinced of the truth and authenticity of Allah's teachings contained in those 114 chapters. Having been around Muslims in my formative years, I knew well that they were not the bloodthirsty, barbaric terrorists that the news media and the televangelists paint them to be. Perhaps this knowledge led me to continue my personal research further than another person would have. I can't say when I actually decided that Islam was for me. It was really a natural progression. In any case, last week [November 1995 -ed.] I went to the Islamic Society of Orange County in Garden Grove and told the brother in charge of the library

### Coding

*Gadahn believes that Muslims are not terrorists, yet he would soon become a member of Al-Qaeda.*

*What was the gateway from this fairly common conversion theme to an embrace of radicalization?*

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**Conversion Story****Coding**

I wanted to be a Muslim. He gave me some excellent reading material, and last Friday I took Shahada [accepted the creed of Islam - ed.] in front of a packed masjid. I have spent this week learning to perform Salat and reflecting on the greatness of Allah. It feels great to be a Muslim! Subhaana rabbiyal 'azeem!

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The story of Adam Gadahn presents several parallels and counterpoints to that of Faisal Shahzad. Both of the narratives can be understood through the framework of the psychosocial approach to terrorism. For example, in Gadahn's case, there is the same sense of drifting that characterized Shahzad. Both men drifted until they found (or, in Shahzad's case, re-found) Islam. For Gadahn, meeting Muslims offered him certainty in a life that had been characterized by a sort of wandering from agnosticism to Christianity to death metal. Gadahn occupied a sort of in-between space in which he has neither part of, nor excluded from, the mainstream psychosocial currents of American life. He lived on the fringes: On a farm, among parents of Jewish and Christian background who had no firm religion, without any notion of who or what he was or wanted to be. When Gadahn encountered Islam, he encountered certainty—not merely certainty in terms of the religious text, but also certainty in the persons of the Muslims whom he met. This certainty was also the same certainty that Shahzad had so deeply craved in his e-mail message to the Muslim online group.

Ironically, Gadahn's conversion story—written before he became affiliated with Al Qaeda—carries the seeds of an explanation of his own radicalization. Gadahn critiques Christians for dogmatism and susceptibility to charisma, but it was precisely this combination of vulnerabilities that stuck Gadahn in 2006, when he came under the sway of Pakistani Muslim fundamentalists in Orange Country, California and decided to leave for terrorist training in Pakistan. While Gadahn has not documented this aspect of his radicalization, his conversion story leaves the all-important clues. Islam brought Gadahn a certainty that he was willing to pursue all the way to the end, and in encountering this certainty—which was propped up by fellow jihadis and consonant with Gadahn's own

search for meaning—he lost contact with all his previous concepts of nuance, compromise, and skepticism. Thus psychically emptied out, Gadahn was easy prey for charismatic, dogmatic figures who could promise him the certainty that had been missing from his whole life to date.

Table 12. Overall Psychosocial Coding of Gadahn’s Experiences

<b>Psychosocial Principle</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Resolution v. Turbulence</b>
First psychosocial principle: Terrorism must not be seen as a syndrome but as a method of social and political influence.	The desire to exert social and political influence can become great in individuals who feel either weak or, as Gadahn was, alienated.	Gadahn gave in to the influence of powerful mentors who had a social and political influence, and certainty, that he lacked and that was missing from his life.
Second principle: The attributes of terrorists are shaped by processes of social interaction.	Gadahn began to interact with like-minded radicals.	Gadahn’s persona was formed online and in the mosques.
Third principle: Terrorist organizations can be analyzed by analogy with other social movements.	Gadahn may have seen jihadism as just another kind of death metal; another stop in his search for extreme experience.	Gadahn never reconciled the theological strength of Islam with its current weakness, except by referring to a future in which Islam also become strong in the world.
Fifth principle: The decision to begin and sustain a terrorist campaign is always legitimized by an extreme ideology.	Gadahn embraced the religion first, ideology second.	Gadahn omitted completely to examine the contradictions between Islamic law and jihadi practice; his resolution is based in willful ignorance.
Sixth principle: Every terrorist campaign involves strategic goals but the rationality which terrorists apply to their violence is imperfect.	Gadahn’s radio broadcasts have had no measurable effect on the success of his cause, but he still sees them as important.	Again, Gadahn’s refusal to ever acknowledge tactical or strategic failure indicates that he is less conflicted than Shahzad.

One theme that is important in the coding of Gadahn’s experiences in distinction to those of Shahzad is that Gadahn found more resolution than Shahzad did, which might explain why Gadahn is still a radio personality rather than a jihadi in the field. Shahzad

struggled mightily with contradictions that he saw, for example the contradiction between God's promise of help and success to the believers and the reality of a weak and fragmented Muslim world. Shahzad also struggled, on a more personal level, between his ambitions and his achievements, which never quite aligned. Thus, Shahzad's act of power was to assert violence over the American state that had, in his mind, denied opportunity and power to both him and Muslim states.

Interestingly, Gadhafi has never tried to exert the same kind of power. He has not been associated with any direct jihadi action and is best known for making radio broadcasts. It may be that the best way to explain the difference between Gadhafi and Shahzad in this respect is that Gadhafi has found a way to live in peace with some beliefs that, for Shahzad, were difficult to sustain. For Shahzad, the only way to reconcile the knowledge of his and Islam's weakness with his knowledge that the Qur'an promised strength was to try to exert power on his own. Gadhafi has had an easier time living with contradictions, perhaps because he does not process them in the same way as Shahzad. For example, Gadhafi, like Saddam Hussein, genuinely believes that his side is winning, no matter what is actually taking place in the world. Those, for example, Gadhafi could portray the Maliki mass shooting as a tactical victory on par with the defeat of an entire army.

There is room in this analysis for the conclusion that, between the two, Shahzad is saner, as his act of jihadism was in its way a means to reconcile the psychic pain of holding contradictory beliefs. Gadhafi appears to be an expert massager of his own beliefs, thus never having to face Shahzad's torment or having to engage in an actual jihadi act of his own to balance the psychic scales.

## V. CONCLUSION

Psychosocial explanations of phenomena do not pre-empt political, historical, or theological explanations. However, what psychosocial explanations do is call more attention to the internal filters of human behavior, specifically the feelings of the individual and the characteristics of the culture and society around that individual. Psychological explanations de-emphasize phenomena that take place “out there,” in an abstract realm of politics or history, and draw them back into an internal frame of reference. In this sense, the psychosocial method of analysis has been very successful in terms of explaining data that would otherwise be aberrant or difficult to classify.

For example, how are researchers to explain the fact that suicide terrorism has so far been a preferred method only for jihadis, and not terrorists from other religious denominations? To date, many explanations of this observed empirical fact have focused on explanations of phenomena “out there,” specifically the history and theology of Islam. It is certainly true that jihadis have themselves called attention to the importance of these external phenomena in explaining their own internal frame of mind (see for example the jihadi testimonies in Gerges, 2006 or any transcripts of the sayings of Bin Laden, 2005). However, this pillar of explanation can be complemented or, depending on the vision of the analyst, replaced by an understanding of homegrown jihadism in particular as a psychosocial response to feared identity loss?

The case studies discussed in this study have offered multiple insights into the lives of homegrown jihadis before and during the critical moments of radicalization. The coding of these cases demonstrated the existence of a host of psychosocial constructs underlying radicalization, including but not limited to questions of sexual identity, communal identity, anxieties related to cultural loss or assimilation, manhood, belonging, bravery, and meaning.

The historical and political grievances of jihadis are shared by millions of jihadis, who do not employ suicide tactics. Thus, any theory of jihadi radicalization should at least try to explain what makes the trajectory of behavior among them so unique. Here, I

advanced a psychosocial theory that drew closely on both Rosenberg (1960) and Festinger (1956), two authorities in social psychology whose constructs have been found valid in many studies. Both Rosenberg and Festinger predicted that a person who lives with a divided self will work hard to either re-integrate the selves or else to keep them separate through self-delusion. Rosenberg and Festinger suggested that, for most people, constant self-delusion or re-integration is possible, but a handful of people will lack the ability either to heal their conflicting selves or to go on lying to themselves. These are the people who are likeliest to take violence action to try to align all of the conflict parts of their world.

In this sense, perhaps the most significant contribution of this study is the idea that the suicide bombing is an essentially selfish act based on psychosocial personality integration. To date, the suicide attack has been studied almost exclusively for its tactical and strategic resonance (see for example Pape, 2006). I concede that the suicide attack is a tool of warfare, but I hotly contest the conclusion that what matters more to the jihadi is the war “out there”; what matters more is the war “in here,” the one in which he can use the suicide attacks as a means of addressing the various ailments of the psychosocial self. The suicide bombing is thus the perfect resolution, the book-end, to the process of jihadi radicalization because it gives the jihadi what he has wanted all along: Certainty, integration, and conclusion.

What, then, is the significance of these findings for those who encounter the jihadi personality *in situ* or those who must fight the mature jihadi? In terms of counselors, clerics, and others who encountered the pre-radical jihadi, the first recommendation is to keep a close eye on young men who are at once sexually awkward or confused and also deeply enamored of Islam. One or the other of these predictors is not enough; both have to be present, and in some way clashing with each other, to predict the formation of the jihadi personality. If early signs are mixed, the next sign of a jihadi will be that of a Muslim man who begins to pull away from women: A devout Muslim man who gets divorced, becomes estranged from his wife, or leaves a girlfriend is going through one of the necessary psychosocial stages that the jihadi organization will later act upon and



exploit. By the same token, a Muslim man, who is devout but who also engages in violence against (rather than merely aversion from) women, is also giving notice of a misogyny that can be part of the maturing jihadi personality.

What can be done to counteract the chance that Muslim men of this kind will become active jihadis? There are only two options. The first is to encourage Muslim men to embrace their Islamic identity over and above their own sexual leanings. This solution will likely be preferred by Muslim religious authorities, but it is a dangerous and incomplete solution. There is always a chance that the attempt at suppression will fail, leading the potential jihadi into an even more aggressive effort to reconcile the two halves of his personality, which would lead once more to radicalization. The second solution is to encourage the potential jihadi to explore and embrace his sexuality. This solution suffers from the lack of a framework. Currently, the only Muslim association that institutionally supports homosexual Muslims is Al-Fatiha, which is not widely distributed on college campuses and American cities in general. The only other option is for young Muslim men to explore denominational LGBT support groups, but cultural caps could make this kind of interaction difficult. There is still a great deal of work to be done in creating a culturally- and theologically-grounded apparatus that can assist Muslims (whether men or not) in the exploration of sexual identities. The absence of such an apparatus will inevitably lead to the production of more jihadis.

In terms of warfare itself, the most important realization is that the jihadi, over time, will pick any target. There is no particular logic in targeting because, as I have argued, the point is to achieve personality re-integration through death, not to achieve any particular aim. The aims, however they are articulated, are hollow; the anger comes from inside, from the jihadi's knowledge of his deeply divided self and not from any external observation of historical or political facts. This conclusion has important implications. First, at the level of grand strategy, it really is true that no actions taken by America or any country plagued by jihadi violence at home or abroad, are likely to reduce jihadism itself. The swamp cannot be drained because the swamp is generated by the internal psychic conflicts of jihadis, which cannot be managed or curtailed by war or police action. Second, at the level of both strategy and tactics, it is folly of the most inexcusable

and avoidable kind to afford jihadis military targets. In the absence of American military targets, jihadis will blow up anything—mosques, school buses, markets—regardless of what consequences these acts will have on the hearts and minds of society because the goal is not the rational application of strategy but the solution of the jihadi's internal psychic pain. Thus, the best strategy when confronted with jihadi suicide bombers is simply to retreat and to allow the jihadis to alienate their own communities, as they will inevitably do, by blowing up local targets.

However, even this solution is not ideal. Social pressure can in some ways reduce the physical flow of jihadis (for example, to madrassahs), but it cannot achieve the root task of psyche reintegration that would make radicalization truly impossible. This task can only be accomplished, I contend, with a psychosocial revolution, in particular one that gives young Muslim men who a socially acceptable and popularly accepted way to integrate the broken parts of their psyches. Such an apparatus already exists for Jews and Christians. It is, however, inchoate in the Muslim world, which has not formally defined jihadism as a therapeutic problem that requires attention from professionals, communities, and volunteers. Ironically, then, the best way to fight jihadi violence is not through military but through social means—not in terms of social engineering, but in both tacit and overt support to existing Muslim social and therapeutic movements more capable of healing the psychosocial rifts within Muslim individuals.

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